

## Interview H0025: with Lhagyari Trichen Namgyal Wangchug [tib. lha rgya ri khri chen rnam rgyal dbang phyug], (India, 13 October 1992) : Part No. 2 of 2

*The interviewee was the head of Lhagyari, one of the oldest and highest rank aristocratic families who were said to be descendants of the early Tibetan Kings. The interviewee first discusses the role of Lhagyari Trichen including his responsibilities and jurisdiction. He describes the General Administrative Office in Lhoka and its function. He discusses the life of cadres in the Tibet Autonomous Region as well as the Youth League and his role in it. He discusses the reforms, Chushigandru, and the Chushigandru's reaction to false Khambas. He details the struggle sessions that followed the Khambas. More broadly, the interviewee describes Chinese preparations for war, financial issues within the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the Khambas disturbances.*

Q

Yesterday and the day before yesterday, we talked about you going to China, right? How long did you stay in China?

A

I stayed there almost a year. It was a long time.

Q

Then you came back in 1955, right?

A

Yes.

Q

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At that time, how was the situation? Was it as same as before? In the years 1951-52-54 the Chinese were using a kind of tactful policy. So were there any changes when you came back? It was said that at that time, the Lamas incited the Khambas to revolt. When you came up, did the trouble in Kham start or not?

A

It had not started yet. Later, it started in the areas on the other side of the Yangtse River such as in Derge [tib. sde dge]. At that time, it was like making the Chinese suspicious because in the areas where the Dalai Lama couldn't go [on the return trip], he sent Trijang Rimpoche to the Gelugpa [tib. dge lugs pa] Monasteries. At that time, the Dalai Lama went to the main places and could not go to the remote places though all the people wanted to see him. In the Nyingma [tib. rnying ma] Monasteries, he sent the Sakya Lama [tib. sa skya] and those other Lamas. In some places, Karmapa was sent. They left 2-3 months earlier while the Dalai Lama was still in China. These high lamas who were with the Dalai Lama were sent for kind of visiting [tib. 'tshams 'dri] to the monasteries. This was not a kind of mobilizing people. The people couldn't come forward to receive the religious teachings, so the high lamas were sent in accord with the Buddhist Sects. At that time, the Chinese suspected and later said that the Dalai Lama stayed in China and sent the lamas to incite [tib. ngan skul] people.

Q

At that time, the monasteries and the people requested the Dalai Lama to visit, right?

A

All the monks in the monasteries that could come to visit through the motor able roads, tried their best to see him and prepared for a meal where he would stop on the way. But in the places 6-7 days journey away, they couldn't come up. So the Lamas were sent [to their areas]. After that, the revolt took place in Kham, so the Chinese were suspicious. Actually the Lamas might have explained to the people about the virtuous deeds and the negative deeds according to the Buddhist tradition and they didn't tell them to purposely oppose the Chinese, but the Chinese suspected them.

Q

What did you do after you came back? Where did you stay?

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A

After I came up, I stayed in Lhasa for 2-3 months and then returned to Lhagyari.

Q

You didn't do any work in Lhasa?

A

I didn't have any work. As you know the title of the Lhagyari Trichen [tib. khri chen] was called Kungö Title [tib. gdan thob] which is equal to the [Kalön](#) so we didn't need to salute to the [Kalön](#) by taking off our [hat](#) [tib. phyag 'bul] unless we were related to each other and then the younger one would salute to the older when we visit each other. Nowadays, all people are called Kungö, but in the past, the people who had the Kungö Title of which the sign is that they have a ruby button [tib. pad ma ra ga'i tog] on their [hat](#). However, we had to salute the Silön [tib. srid blon] or the Sitsab. Lhagyari had over 500 [dön](#) of land and I was working these people. I didn't stay idle without any work. At that time, it was the like the saying, "The lord's lineage and the servant's generation." [tib. dpon gdung rabs/ g.yog mi rabs], people respected us because of the lineage and we won't be changed like the district heads. We had to rule over the people from generation to generation and people also respected us in the same way. I had to govern the people legally because we had the right of jurisdiction over one's own subjects and take care of their livelihood. There was the Lhoji, the governor-general of Lhoka and the Lhagyari area. In case one of our [miser](#) and a [miser](#) of the another monastery got into fight and even killed each other, both sides would have to submit a petition to the Lhoji. Otherwise, whatever happened inside the jurisdiction of Lhagyari like theft and murder, we were allowed to make the decision.

Q

What did you do in Lhagyari?

A

This is what I mentioned above.

Q

Did you have an office in Lhagyari?

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A

Yes, it was called the Manager's office, Chandzökhong [tib. phyag mdzod khang]. Normally, the Kashag and the [Yigtsang](#) would send the edicts to the districts. When they sent edicts to Lhagyari, it was addressed as, "To the Chandzö of Lhagyari." [tib. rgya ri phyag mdzod pa la]. Our Chandzö (manager/steward) was appointed by the government and he could have a tassel on his horse. The way of selecting the Chandzö was democratic. We had 32 servants who had lands and there were 9 monasteries called eigön [tib. e dgon] and there were the representatives of over 50 places under our jurisdiction. They will vote for the Chandzö from among the 32 servants or 9 monasteries when the former died or resigned. When they select the Chandzö, they would put some wheat in a silver basin and the people would put the vote on the wheat. Then we would submit a petition to the Dalai Lama and report the candidate who got the majority vote. There would be three top candidates [submitted].

Q

Later on, I am going to ask you in detail about the system of Lhagyari. For the time being, regarding politics, what changes took place in Lhagyari?

A

As I told you, I stayed 2-3 months in Lhasa. Then we went to receive the Dalai Lama at Gyamda [tib. rgya mda']. [Kalön](#) Shasur was there. In the past, when the 13th Dalai Lama came back from China, there was a system that a reception group should go to Gyamda to receive him. I was among the second reception team and Lhalu and the representatives of the three great monasteries and the people were also there. Altogether, there were about 11 vehicles.

Q

When you were staying in Lhagyari, you said that there was an office of the [TAR](#), right?

A

After the Dalai Lama came up, the [TAR](#) was set up and in the localities, the General Administration Offices [tib. spyi khyab don gcod] [was set up] in Lhoka, Chamdo and Shigatse. These were a branch of the [TAR](#). At that time, the Governor of Kongpo, the

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Kongji [tib. kong spyi] was Trekhang Samjola [tib. bkras khang bsam mchog lags]. The Director or Truren [ch. zhu ren] and the Vice Director [tib. gzhon pa] confirmed by the [TAR](#) and approved by the Dalai Lama. Since the Dalai Lama approved it, we could not refuse it. So I worked in the Lhokha General Administration Office.

Q

What was your main title and the work?

A

I was the Truren.

Q

How many Truren were there in that office?

A

At that time, the Party Secretary, Shuji [tib. shu ji] and the Truren was [Shölkhang](#) and I was the assistant [tib. las rogs] Truren. Among the Vice Truren, there was a leader of the Party Committee called Wang Yuxia and Tsidrung Nedong [tib. sne gdong] and Dzongpön Thubten Gaphel [tib. thub bstan dga' 'phel]. And there were some sections or Khe, [ch. ke] like the Financial Section [tib. nor srid], Culture [tib. rig gzhung] Section, and a Hygiene [tib. 'phrod bsten] Section. Each had a Section Leader or Kezhang [tib. [ke](#) zhang]. The Section Leaders came from one of the district heads of the 18 districts in the Lhoka area.

Q

These were all Tibetan Government officials, right?

A

Yes. They were the lay and monk officials of the government working in the districts. So among the two [district heads], whoever was suitable was appointed to work in the General Office and the other one would take care of the district. If there was only one district head, he was appointed and he left an Acting district head to work in the district. Some of the district heads who didn't have much knowledge or were incapable or didn't like the Chinese ideology, so they were not appointed.

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Q

At that time, what was the thinking of [Shölkhang](#)?

A

He was tough [tib. mkhregs po] and straight-forward and sometimes he was also short-tempered. When when there was something tense, we would feel unhappy. So they would not call him and just tell him, "We have received an edict from the [TAR](#) and there is such and such work, but you don't need to come. We will consult you when there is something that we can't make a decision on." I heard that when he was unhappy, he couldn't go to sleep. There were also about 30 [uyön](#) consisted of the Senior Section Leaders who came from the districts. In each section, the Senior Section Leader was a [kudrak](#) and the junior one was the capable person in that locality. They were all paid salaries.

Q

Did the [TAR](#) pay the salaries?

A

Yes, basically, it was paid from the [TAR](#) branches and there was a full set of accountants and cashiers.

Q

What work did you have to do that office?

A

We had to do whatever work was assigned by the [TAR](#).

Q

For example, what did they do regarding hygiene?

A

They went through the motions of sending some doctors and built some roads where it is very hard to get through.

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Q

Was there an office in charge of building roads?

A

Yes, there was the Transportation [tib. 'grims 'drul] Section. They would deal with building the motor roads.

Q

At that time, how did you feel when you were working in the office? Was there any trouble then?

A

At that time, mainly the work was assigned by the [TAR](#). All of the people in the office were kind of private persons from the district and the estates who could stand on their own feet and furthermore, they were paid. So nobody was saying that they had hardships and they didn't want to stay there. The 30 [uyön](#) would go to work in the different sections. The highest salary went to the Truren who was equal to the [uyön](#) of the [TAR](#). He got 750 [dayan](#) per month. The two Vice Truren got 650 [dayan](#). The [uyön](#) get 570-580 [dayan](#). They didn't ask anything from the Tibetan Government.

Q

Would they hold meetings?

A

They would hold meetings frequently.

Q

Was it like once a week?

A

All of the 30 people called from the district and the estates had to study every day and hold the offices. On Mondays and Fridays, they would study and they worked in the offices on the other days. Sunday was a holiday.

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Q

What did they have to study?

A

They had to study the books of Mao Zedong. The Chinese would explain it to them and the people had to say their opinions.

Q

Could they say that what Mao Zedong said was wrong?

A

They couldn't say that. When they said something that is different from what was said in the book, they would explain to them saying that you are wrong. At that time, this was the idea and the situation.

Q

At that time, did they go to the study under duress manner or were they kind of interested on the study?

A

At that time, people didn't have any hardship regarding their livelihood because they were paid an adequate salary. If we had to go to Lhasa, they would send you a car and the social situation was also kind of clear and we could hear clearly the changes in the [TAR](#). So people felt kind of engrossed [tib. dbyings yod pa] in going to the office and they didn't show any sign of not being willing to stay there. This was because it was not decided to implement the land reforms.

Q

You mean the democratic reforms?

A

Yes, at that time, those people had whatever they had in the past and in addition to that, they got the salary. And when we traveled to Lhasa, the office would pay the expenditures.



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Q

When they held the meetings, what kind of meetings would they hold?

A

The meetings were held according to what ever the [TAR](#) confirmed and whatever changes there were in the [TAR](#). The [TAR](#) would send the documents to the General Administration Office regarding whatever was confirmed in the meetings of the [TAR](#). We would discuss whether we were able to accomplish whatever the [TAR](#) confirmed. And there was also the matter of whether the TAR's decision was suitable for the localities or not.

Q

How long did you work in that office?

A

I worked for 2-3 years from 1956-1958.

Q

Were there quite a lot of political changes in the years 1956-57-58?

A

After the General Administration Office was set up, the District Administration Office [tib. rdzong don gcod las khungs] was set up in the district.

Q

This was under the General Office, right?

A

Yes, the people in those offices were also paid a salary in the same way. Then also set up the Lhoka Youth League [tib. gzhon nu tshogs pa]. At that time, I was also the [uyön](#) of the [TAR](#) Financial and Economy [tib. nor srid dpal 'byor] unit and also the Truren of the Lhoka Youth League. At that time, I was young and was doing three jobs.

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Q

In the years, 1956-57-58, wasn't the situation becoming deteriorated and didn't it start to become slightly tense?

A

Yes, it was a little bit tense. When they implemented the democratic reform, the [TAR](#) passed the order to the General Administration Office and the General Office would pass the order to the district. At that time, it was confirmed that the reforms were postponed.

Q

You mean when the Dalai Lama went to India, right?

A

Yes. At that time, the edict for the postponement for the reform for 6 years came. Then we discussed that.

Q

Before the postponement, were they saying that they are going to do the democratic reform?

A

Yes, they were saying that.

Q

This was after the [TAR](#) was set up, right?

A

Yes, then they set up the General Administration Office. The final goal of this office was to implement the democratic reforms.

Q

When this kind of documents came, what did you think?

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A

At that time, they told us, "When the democratic reforms are implemented, you will not have the ownership right on such a large amount of land, but you can have all your private wealth as before. And we will arrange your work according to the number of people [in your household]."

Q

When they implement the democratic reform, weren't they saying that they will eliminate your estates and those things?

A

They were saying that, but at that time, I didn't think that much because it is like the proverb, "When the whole area is flooded, a single pebble won't be left dry." [tib. lung pa chus 'jigs na rdo leb skam po]. If there would be change in the whole of Tibet, we, Lhagyari, would be the same. I didn't think that it was too bad. But, I thought the religious activities will be harmed [tib. 'thus shor].

In Lhagyari, there was the monastery called Dagpo [tib. dwags po] Tratsang which had about 500-600 monks. From the 25th of the 4th month, during the 5th month, we would invite all the monks of Dagpo Tratsang and we would serve them food and offer alms. So we wouldn't be able to do that. How could we invite them [if the estates were taken away]? In the past, because we had the income, we also had the means of offering alms to the monks.

Q

At that time, did you have any talk regarding this with the monasteries?

A

Yes. They did not agree to this and said, "In the past, you were called the Trichen and you didn't need to serve the government. But this time, you are working for the Chinese in the General Administration Office. Therefore, rather than doing that, please serve the Tibetan Government."

Q

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Who told you this?

A

All the servants and the people told me this. So I joined the [Tibetan] government service and when the Dalai Lama took his exams in the Tratsang [tib. grwa skor] [monasteries in 1958] I had the hair knot [of a lay official].

Q

Did the people tell you that it is not good to work for the Chinese?

A

At that time, I explained to them, "It was not only for the Chinese. The leader of the [TAR](#) is the Dalai Lama. He decided that we should work in the offices and not the Chinese." But by that time, the time was kind of over for me to stay without work as before. So I told them, "If you don't agree for me to work in the joint office of the Chinese and the Tibetans, I will join the service of the Tibetan Government. Then I submitted the petition to serve the government.

Q

So when did you have the audience to become the government official? Was it after the Dalai Lama came from India?

A

Yes, probably in 1958.

Q

At that time, [Chushigandru](#) had started, right?

A

While I was in Lhagyari [Chushigandru](#) started and they came to the Lhagyari area and told us to sell them barley, butter and borrow horses and mules. And the Khambas also went to the people to bother them a little bit and they took away butter, meat and those things. Some of these were paid in money and some of them were not. The worse ones also came to the houses and robbed the gold and silverware and guns.

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Q

At that time, when the Khambas came, did the people think that they were opposing the Chinese and we should support them?

A

When the Khambas came, they didn't do well. If they had come there in a decent manner, of course the people would have supported them because [Chushigandru](#) was for opposing the Chinese and not opposing the Tibetan Government politics. But when they came, they were indeed Khambas and didn't have political ideology and took away fodder and food from the [miser](#) by force and they also robbed the better horses and mules. They also told the [miser](#) to sell guns and they didn't make the full payment. Therefore, the people in Lhoka area were scared of the Khambas because they made them feel uncomfortable. At that time, they bought grain for their soldiers from the local places and it was not supplied by the government.

Q

At that time, didn't they ask the government to help them on sly?

A

No, they didn't. Otherwise there were government storage grains like the grain collected as the "addition tax" (tib. shiphar [zhib 'phar]). There were also false Khambas taking the name of the [Chushigandru](#) and robbing things. Later, the real officers of the [Chushigandru](#) enquired about this and they declared that they were false Khambas and executed those false Khambas.

Q

Yes, I also heard that. If you say false Khambas, did the Chinese know the [Khamba](#) dialect?

A

There were Khambas among the soldiers and it was said that some of the false Khambas were Chinese. There were quite a lot of [Khamba](#) interpreters in the People's Liberation

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Army and there were Bapas [tib. 'ba' pa], and the Bapas spoke fluent Chinese and Tibetan.

Q

Didn't Lhagyari specifically support the Khambas?

A

Yes. We gave barley, butter, horses and mules. When 500-600 riders would come, they took away 5-6 guns and robbed many horses.

Q

Did they just take it away?

A

They told us to sell them horses and gave back to us their exhausted horses. Then they rode our horses with good sheen. They just went through the motions of paying a little bit for the horses and left their exhausted ones. They were saying, "We are the Volunteer Army for Defending Religion [tib. bstan srung dang blangs dmag] and we are not working for the Chinese. Like this, they kind of boasted and the people knew what they robbed from them and they didn't know about in the future how the religion would flourish. So there were some problems between the people and people were not relaxed.

That's why when the democratic reforms were [about to be] implemented and the people rose up all of a sudden. When they [the Chinese] held many struggle sessions, the people said, "What the so called Volunteer Army for Defending the Religion incited by the Tibetan Government did was rob grain, and rape and beat people. They were not reliable.

Q

So the people didn't like them, right?

A

Yes, at that time, all of the 32 servants of Lhagyari had guns like the Mauser pistols and some other good guns. So some of the Khambas robbed the guns and some of them just paid a little bit.

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Q

How was the situation in Lhasa in 1958? Some say that the Chinese build bunkers in Lhasa and prepared for war.

A

Yes, they had already got prepared and they built bunkers around the main offices.

Q

Do you mean everywhere?

A

In Lhasa, in areas like the "New Regiment" (tib. magar sarpa [dmag sgar gsar pa]) and Lubug [tib. klu sbug] they built bunkers on both sides of the gates and the main house.

Q

Compared to the years 1951-52, when did it become worse? What do you think when you look back at the situation?

A

When I look at the situation, they set up the [TAR](#) which changed the situation and they lured some important persons through financial means by paying high salary and letting them have their estates as before.

Q

Did they do that everywhere?

A

Yes, for example in Lhasa in the [TAR](#), there were [kudrak](#) in all the offices. They became cadres and they were made to introduce 10 people like their relatives to become cadres. All of them were paid salary and there was an abundant of [dayan](#) coins. So there were changes taking place.

Q

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When they did that, the people became closer to the Chinese rather than their relation becoming worse, right?

A

Basically, the Chinese were deceiving people through financial means and influencing them. In the past, I heard that when the Dalai Lama came to Lhasa to the ceremonies the Chinese would welcome him with the dance and the song group. But when the Dalai Lama came for his exams in the [tratsang](#) [monasteries], the Chinese didn't welcome him with the dance and song group and the soldiers. They just stayed in their houses.

Q

In 1958, the situation became worse, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Was [Chushigandru](#) the main cause of this situation?

A

It was caused by [Chushigandru](#). When they went to Lhoka and they attacked the Chinese offices in Lhüntse [tib. lhun rtse] and Tsetang [tib. rtse dhang]. In Tsetang, there was the biggest office of the General Administration Office. They also attacked it and caused a lot of damages and the Chinese had to send new soldiers to Lhoka.

Consequently, the government held meetings and sent [Namseling](#) [tib. nam sras gling] and those people to stop the Khambas' disturbance, but the Khambas didn't listen to them and they continued staying in Lhoka and furthermore they expanded and connected with the people in India. So the Chinese started sending soldiers there. After the Khambas rose, the Chinese started to get prepared.

Q

Where were you when [Namseling](#) and Samjola were sent [to Lhoka]?

A



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I was in Lhasa.

Q

Did you have any talks?

A

They held meetings frequently.

Q

What kind of meetings?

A

They held the meeting on ceasing the disturbances between the Khambas and the Tibetans in the printing house (tib. shöl parkhang [zhol par khang]).

Q

Did all the government officials attend?

A

Yes.

Q

It wasn't the [tsondu](#) gyendzom (the Full Assembly), right?

A

It was the gyendzom.

Q

Normally, would they hold the gyendzom in [Shöl](#) Parkhang?

A

Yes, they would also hold it in the Shabten Lhakhang [tib. zhabs brtan lha khang] in [Norbulinga](#). Then it was said that it is good to hold the meeting there and how about

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holding in [Shöl](#) Parkhang. [Note: he is talking about 1959. The meeting about the Khambas was held in late 1958].

Q

At that time, did the Chinese tell the Tibetan Government and the Kashag that you should eliminate the Khamba's disturbance?

A

Yes, the Chinese were telling the government a lot, implying that [Lukhangwa](#) and those people mobilized the [Chushigandru](#).

Q

At that time, [Lukhangwa](#) was not there. He was in India, right?

A

Yes. But the Sitsab caused some hindrances for the Chinese and [Lukhangwa](#) and Andrutsang [tib. a 'brug tshang] were very close. The Chinese was saying, "Sitsab [Lukhangwa](#) and Andrutsang were very close and Andrutsang Gombo Tashi regularly trusted [Lukhangwa](#) and Andrutsang was the main leader. [Lukhangwa](#) had instigated Andrutsang."

Q

You mean even when [Lukhangwa](#) was not there?

A

Even when [Lukhangwa](#) was not there, but the Khambas had already gone to Lhoka and Andrutsang was the leader who was very close to [Lukhangwa](#). But we didn't know he had mobilized them, but the Chinese suspected him. They indeed had relations and he trusted [Lukhangwa](#) and Andrutsang was a big trader and he would go to [Lukhangwa](#) and seek advices and the Chinese will know who had the relations with Andrutsang.

Q

The meeting was held in [Norbulinga](#), right?

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A

Yes, it was said that there would be disturbance because Phagpalha [tib. 'phags pa lha] Khenjung was killed.

Q

Was it at that time?

A

Yes, it just before the revolt.

Q

Even at that time, was there the talk about eliminating the [Chushigandru](#)?

A

Yes.

Q

Wasn't it long before that when Samjola was sent?

A

Yes, but the meeting was held. What happened to Phagpala's brother was at the time of the second meeting. The first meeting was about ceasing the Khamba's disturbance. At that time, it was too bad. The minutes on the conversation in the meeting were lost.